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First Bird Identified in Wisconsin During 2003 With West Nile Virus Crow found in Milwaukee County tested positive for West Nile Virus

The Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) has been notified by the State of Wisconsin Division of Public Health (DPH) of the first bird that has tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) this year in Wisconsin. The bird specimen (crow) was collected by the City Milwaukee Health Department last month as part of on-going surveillance activities associated with WNV tracking in the City over the coming season. The analysis of the bird was performed by the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene in Madison.

“The finding of WNV in certain susceptible bird species like crows is not surprising and is expected” said Paul Biedrzycki, Disease Control and Prevention Manager for the City of Milwaukee Health Department. “The re-emergence of the virus in birds follows a common pattern seen elsewhere in the country since the virus was first detected in New York City in 1999. The finding in a single bird does not represent an imminent health risk to this community but does confirm the continuing presence of this virus which is transmitted from bird to mosquito and ultimately to human and other animal hosts through the bite from an infected mosquito.”

The MHD is coordinating a number of activities within Milwaukee County in response to WNV infection prevention and control. These include surveillance, public awareness and mosquito control measures. While overall, the risk of serious WNV human infection is low, personal preventative measures are recommended especially for the most susceptible persons in the community, primarily the elderly, young children and persons with underlying medical and chronic health conditions. These include:

- Avoid outdoors between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes tend to be most active.
- Wear light colored long sleeve shirts and pants when outdoors.
- Use mosquito repellant containing DEET when outdoors.
- Ensure that screens, windows and doors are in good repair to prevent entry of mosquitoes.
- Eliminate stagnant water around the home that may serve as mosquito-breeding places including water in birdbaths, wading pools, clogged rain gutters, old tires and buckets.

In Wisconsin in 2002, there were 52 human cases of WNV, including three deaths. For further information on WNV, visit the City of Milwaukee Health Department website at www.milwaukee.gov/health or call the Milwaukee Health Department at **414-286-3606**.

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